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**Report on the activities of the Office of
Internal Oversight Services****Efficiency of the implementation of the mandate of the
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights****Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services**

**“OHCHR has made important contributions to the promotion,
protection and mainstreaming of human rights ... the Office
could achieve greater results through a more strategic focus on
its primary strengths and comparative advantage”**

Summary

In accordance with paragraph 101 of General Assembly resolution 62/236, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a review of the efficiency of the implementation of the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

OHCHR has made important contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights by raising the visibility of human rights issues in the international community, providing support to build and embed a human rights capacity in national legislation and institutions and contributing to the implementation of the human rights-based approach across the United Nations system.

However, within the context of the broad mandate of OHCHR and its existing resources, OIOS finds that the strategic focus of the Office needs to be sharpened in order to mitigate the risk of its activities being spread too thinly to achieve systematic, sustainable and coherent results. As the only United Nations entity exclusively dedicated to human rights and working within a crowded international human rights community, OIOS finds it imperative that OHCHR be more strategic in its identification of critical activities and establish better its organizational priorities.

* A/64/150.



Based on stakeholder perceptions and its independent assessment, OIOS concludes that the comparative advantage of OHCHR in fulfilling its mandate lies in its position as the central reference point and advocate for international human rights standards and mechanisms. OHCHR has the potential for global impact as the authoritative source of advice and assistance to governments, civil society and other United Nations entities concerning compliance with those standards and on the human rights-based approach. OIOS argues that these are functions that OHCHR is best placed to undertake as the only United Nations entity with an exclusive human rights mandate. While OIOS recognizes the important contribution of OHCHR monitoring and reporting activities to the protection of international human rights, it notes that these activities are largely confined to countries and regions with a field presence. OHCHR can most efficiently utilize its finite resources by strategically focusing its activities in line with this comparative advantage.

OIOS also finds that the rapid growth of OHCHR field operations has not been fully coherent. More explicit terms of engagement for its field operations, including the consistent development of entry and exit strategies, would increase its effectiveness. A more strategic and coordinated approach to the development and management of partnerships would enable OHCHR to extend the reach of its activities and to increase the impact of its work. In addition, OHCHR provides significant support to human rights bodies but the follow-up to the work of these bodies needs strengthening. Finally, while recognizing the fluid state of change within which OHCHR has recently been operating, OIOS identifies management challenges in the Office, including unclear leadership direction, inefficient coordination and undocumented processes for some critical tasks.

OIOS recommends that OHCHR:

- In finalizing and implementing the High Commissioner's strategic management plan, for 2010-2011, further sharpen its strategic focus
- Develop an overarching field strategy document
- Improve its work with the human rights bodies through more systematic follow-up of their recommendations and enhancement of linkages
- Further strengthen its partnership
- Improve internal coordination and communication
- Identify and document all critical work processes that have not yet been documented.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with paragraph 101 of General Assembly resolution 62/236, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reviewed the efficiency of the implementation of the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). To conduct this review comprehensively, OIOS used its standard evaluation methodology and assessed the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, including the impact, of OHCHR activities in relation to their objectives.¹

II. Methodology

2. OIOS utilized nine qualitative and quantitative methods for its evaluation: (a) 16 interviews conducted with the OHCHR leadership to collect preliminary data as part of a scoping mission, followed by 87 interviews of OHCHR staff and partners in Geneva and New York;² (b) case study site visits to six OHCHR field presences, during which 135 in-depth interviews were conducted with field-based OHCHR staff, governmental officials, representatives of United Nations entities and civil society partners;³ (c) a self-administered web-based survey of all OHCHR staff;⁴ (d) a self-administered web-based survey of all States members of the Human Rights Council;⁵ (e) a self-administered web-based survey of all special mandate holders;⁶ (f) a self-administered web-based survey of treaty body members;⁷ (g) a self-administered web-based survey of OHCHR partners;⁸ (h) a local population survey in Colombia;⁹ and (i) a desk review of the mandate of OHCHR, the High Commissioner's strategic management plan, budget fascicles, workplans, recent annual reports of the High Commissioner, policy and procedural documentation and selected performance reports.

¹ The General Assembly, in paragraph 101 of its resolution 62/236, requested both a comprehensive review of human resources management in OHCHR and a review of the efficiency of the implementation of its mandate. The present report addresses the second part of the request; a separate OIOS report (A/64/201) addresses the first part.

² The scoping mission to Geneva was conducted from 15 to 18 September 2008. Subsequent Geneva-based interviews were conducted from 2 to 11 February 2009. Four interviews were conducted in New York.

³ The sites visited and the dates of the visits were as follows: Colombia, 1-3 December 2008 (included a visit to the Bucaramanga sub-office); Panama, 4 and 5 December 2008; Ecuador, 2-4 February 2009; United Nations Mission in Liberia, 6-10 April 2009; Kenya, 24 March 2009; and Uganda, 27-30 April 2009.

⁴ The survey was conducted from 14 January to 5 March 2008 and was sent to 982 staff, based on a staff list provided by OHCHR; 395 responses were received, a 40 per cent response rate.

⁵ The survey was conducted from 30 March to 30 April 2009 and was sent to all 47 States members of the Human Rights Council; 22 responses were received, a 47 per cent response rate.

⁶ The survey was conducted from 9 March to 2 April 2009 and was sent to 56 current and former special mandate holders; 20 responses were received, a 36 per cent response rate.

⁷ The survey was conducted in March and April 2009 and was sent to 121 treaty body members; 48 responses were received, a 40 per cent response rate.

⁸ The survey was conducted from 8 April to 1 May 2009 and was sent to 83 United Nations entities, civil society organizations and international organizations; 32 responses were received, a 38 per cent response rate.

⁹ The survey was conducted from 13 to 30 April 2009 using a sample of 1,200 respondents from almost all regions and socio-economic groups of Colombia.

3. This evaluation methodology has some limitations. While the OIOS methodology included the review of all key activities, not all could be analysed in detail. In addition, response rates for surveys were not consistently high (two were below 40 per cent). However, in all cases, OIOS triangulated data. For example, survey data were supplemented with data from other sources to compensate for low response rates.

III. Background

4. Human rights constitute one of the United Nations pillars. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly in 1948, the United Nations has overseen the development of a comprehensive body of human rights legislation and has worked to incorporate a human rights-based approach in all of its programmes.

Mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

5. OHCHR promotes and protects the human rights guaranteed under international law and stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its mandate derives from Articles 1, 13 and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as General Assembly resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993, by which it created the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. On 15 September 1997, in the context of the programme for reform of the United Nations (A/51/950, para. 79), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights were consolidated into a single office: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

6. The mandate of OHCHR includes responsibility for providing substantive support to other components of the United Nations human rights system: the Human Rights Council (including the universal periodic review and special procedures mechanisms) and nine¹⁰ human rights treaty bodies. OHCHR is responsible for the promotion and protection of over 40 specific human rights.

7. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is mandated by the General Assembly with principal responsibility for the following activities (see General Assembly resolution 48/141):

- (a) Promoting and protecting the effective enjoyment of all human rights;
- (b) Making recommendations to the competent bodies of the United Nations system in the field of human rights with a view to improving the promotion and protection of all human rights;

¹⁰ Human Rights Committee; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Committee against Torture; Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Committee on the Rights of the Child; Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- (c) Promoting and protecting the realization of the right to development;
- (d) Providing technical assistance;
- (e) Coordinating United Nations human rights education and public information programmes;
- (f) Contributing to the removal of obstacles to the realization of human rights;
- (g) Contributing to the prevention of the continuation of human rights violations;
- (h) Engaging in a dialogue with all Governments with a view to securing respect for all human rights;
- (i) Enhancing international cooperation;
- (j) Coordinating the human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system;
- (k) Rationalizing, adapting, strengthening and streamlining the United Nations human rights machinery.

8. The four-year term of the current High Commissioner began on 1 September 2008.

Structure of the Office

9. OHCHR is composed of four divisions at the subprogramme level, as follows:

- (a) The Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division coordinates the provision of substantive support to OHCHR field presences and undertakes related functions, including rapid responses to critical situations on the ground;
- (b) The Research and Right to Development Division researches and analyses human rights issues, supports institutional partnerships, and provides technical advice, expertise and tools to OHCHR field presences, United Nations country teams and partners;
- (c) The Human Rights Council and Treaties Division provides substantive and technical support to the Human Rights Council and other United Nations human rights bodies;
- (d) The Special Procedures Division provides administrative and logistical assistance to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of posts, by division.

Table 1
Staff resources of OHCHR, by division

<i>Division</i>	<i>Number of Posts</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Research and Right to Development	99	12
Human Rights Council and Treaties	89	10
Field Operations and Technical Cooperation ^a	598	70
Special Procedures	63	7
Total	849	100

Sources: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/6 (Sect. 23) and Corr.1), sect. C, subprogrammes 1-4.

^a Includes headquarters and field office staff (see A/62/6 (Sect. 23) and Corr.1, organizational chart).

10. OHCHR has four types of field presence: country offices, regional offices, human rights advisers and human rights components of peacekeeping missions. In December 2008, there were 50 such field presences.

Resources

11. For the 2008-2009 biennium, OHCHR has an overall budget of US\$ 309,354,000, with 996 staff posts.¹¹ Around 37 per cent of the budget and 31 per cent of the posts are funded from the regular budget, and the remainder from voluntary contributions from Member States, intergovernmental organizations, foundations and individuals.

Goals

12. The strategic framework and programme budget for OHCHR set out 26 expected accomplishments. The High Commissioner's strategic management plan for the current 2008-2009 biennium outlines four broad goals:

(a) Demonstrating **leadership** through advocacy and generation of debate within the United Nations, as well as with governments and civil society, on the benefits of integrating human rights into efforts to achieve development, peace and security;

(b) Focusing on a better articulation of the OHCHR **country engagement** strategy, with a clearer definition of roles, complementarities and coordination among the various field presences and between them and headquarters;

(c) Strengthening of **partnerships** forged with United Nations agencies and country teams on the basis of lessons learned;

(d) Reinforcing interaction with **United Nations human rights mechanisms**, placing emphasis on the universal periodic review of all countries by the Human Rights Council as an opportunity to improve the realization of human

¹¹ Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/6 (Sect. 23) and Corr.1), tables 23.3 and 23.4.

rights based on solid human rights analysis, and lending support and assistance to ensure the success of the exercise.

IV. Evaluation findings

A. The Office has made important contributions to the promotion, protection and mainstreaming of human rights through raising the visibility of human rights issues, supporting human rights capacity-building and promoting the implementation of the human rights-based approach across the United Nations system

13. Human rights measurement is challenging, with no comprehensive or centralized database on human rights available. While a number of United Nations entities and other organizations have reported on human rights issues, no common indicators for measuring human rights abuses and no universally accepted means of monitoring the human rights situation exist. OIOS noted instances in which the various organizations reported on human rights within the same country using different criteria and measurements.

14. Despite this lack of global, comparable data, the information that does exist points to continued human rights problems throughout the world, notwithstanding some apparent improvements. In one country visited by OIOS, one organization reported that more than 182 people had been victims of enforced disappearance during the 12 months ending June 2008, compared to 119 persons in the prior 12-month period. The same organization also reported an increase in new forced displacement cases, from 191,000 in the first six months of 2007 to 270,000 in the first six months of 2008. As further examples, 44 countries held prisoners of conscience in 2004, an improvement over 2001, when 63 countries held such prisoners; also, in 2004, 58 countries arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals without charge or trial, compared to the 72 countries that did so in 2001.

15. Within this context of continuing human rights violations in the world, OIOS finds that OHCHR has made a number of contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights. The comprehensive body of universal standards, institutions and mechanisms that has developed over the past 40 years owes much to the efforts of United Nations human rights bodies supported by OHCHR and its predecessor, the Centre for Human Rights. OHCHR has also played a role in heightening awareness within the international community of human rights issues and violations.

16. Based on its interview and survey data, as well as field visits and document reviews, OIOS classified OHCHR contributions into the three categories discussed below. However, OIOS notes that these contributions were not always systematic or sustainable.

The Office has contributed to the raised visibility of human rights issues in the international community

17. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is perceived by many as the visible face of human rights and a strong and independent voice in defending those rights. Over one half of all interviewees at OHCHR headquarters

and field offices consider the High Commissioner's ability to provide leadership and catalyse action on human rights to be a major asset of the Office. The High Commissioner's statements are seen as increasing the visibility of human rights issues and carrying influence within the United Nations and the international community.

18. The Office and the human rights mechanisms it supports report on human rights issues and participate in human rights events, education and public awareness campaigns. Based on interview and survey data, these activities appear to increase the likelihood that violations are publicized and accountability is sought. For example, more than one third of all interviewees in Colombia volunteered that OHCHR had been successful in raising the visibility of extrajudicial executions and contributing to the Government's increased focus on this issue; reports issued by the OHCHR Colombian office have repeatedly referred to extrajudicial executions, listing them in 2006 among a series of grave violations related to civil and political rights.¹² Direct intervention by the Office in cases of alleged human rights violations was also identified by interviewees as having been pivotal in achieving results in particular cases and in exerting a deterrent effect.

19. The sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 2008 was an opportunity for OHCHR to promote human rights to the general public. To examine the human rights awareness of individuals following these celebrations and in a country in which OHCHR has had a long-standing presence, OIOS surveyed the population of Colombia in April 2009 (see box). The survey showed that Colombians regard human rights as important and that they have been exposed to information about human rights. Most believed that their personal awareness of human rights, as well as that of Colombians in general, had increased over the past 10 years. OIOS attributes at least part of this increased awareness to OHCHR, both directly through the work of its Colombian office and indirectly through its influence on national and international partners.

Knowledge of human rights among the population of Colombia

To examine knowledge and awareness of human rights among the population, OIOS commissioned a population survey in Colombia, a country in which OHCHR has had a long-standing presence.^a The survey was not designed to assess the work of governmental agencies in the area of human rights, but rather to assess the impact of the OHCHR country office. The survey findings showed that:

(a) Colombians regard human rights as important to them personally and integral to many public policy issues. Presented with a list of four larger issues (economic development, environmental protection, international relations and respect for human rights), two thirds of all respondents, and even higher proportions of women and young people, reported that respect for human rights was most important. The rights to live in freedom and safety and to equal treatment under the law were considered most important; 80 per cent or more of respondents believed that issues including children, health and education, food and water, working conditions and the environment were human rights issues;

¹² See E/CN.4/2006/9; see also subsequent reports of the High Commissioner to the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Colombia.

(b) Just over one third of Colombians surveyed reported receiving information about human rights over the past year. The media were the main source of such information, although schools and educational facilities were important sources for young people;

(c) Knowledge of the international and national legal framework around human rights is limited, although more than 90 per cent of respondents knew that international laws and treaties existed and that Colombia had laws promoting and protecting human rights. When asked whether particular institutions or organizations worked to promote and protect human rights in Colombia, 15 per cent of respondents identified the main agency responsible for human rights (Defensor del Pueblo de la República de Colombia), while a slightly higher proportion nominated the United Nations;

(d) Around one half of the respondents were aware that OHCHR had an office in Colombia, but only a fraction had had any contact with it. Respondents overwhelmingly supported its presence and two thirds believed that it had had a positive impact;

(e) Awareness of human rights issues appears to have increased in Colombia. Around 70 per cent of respondents regarded themselves as more aware of such issues than they had been 10 years earlier and a similar proportion believed that the awareness of Colombians in general had increased;

(f) When responses were disaggregated by gender, women reported significantly higher levels of interest in human rights and significantly lower levels of knowledge concerning human rights mechanisms in Colombia than did men. Differences in location, education and socio-economic status were less influential.

² The Colombian office of OHCHR, established in 1996, had a staff of 80 in December 2008, making it the third longest-operating and second largest of the OHCHR country offices. See OHCHR, *2008 Report: Activities and Results*, pp. 68-153.

The Office has provided support to build and embed human rights capacity in national institutions, legislation and civil society

20. The Office has applied its technical expertise to assisting governments, in particular in countries in which it has a field presence. When invited to do so, OHCHR reviews existing legislation and provides support for drafting new legislation that complies with international human rights standards and treaties. It also supports governments and civil society in their preparation of reports required under treaties and the universal periodic review mechanism. In Colombia and Uganda, for example, every interviewee involved in this work stressed the important role played by OHCHR in helping them to develop strong human rights-compliant legislative tools and the utility of this assistance to host governments. Also, a governmental official in one country visited by OIOS observed that the Government's approach to minority and disadvantaged groups had evolved from a charity model to a rights-based model and that OHCHR had assisted in incorporating this into public policy and legislation. OHCHR has also played a capacity-building role in national human rights institutions, national military

operations and civil society organizations. In all six OHCHR field presences visited by OIOS, OHCHR was providing courses and materials on human rights directly to the recipients and training trainers. In Uganda, for example, OHCHR reported having provided training in human rights to over 3,300 military and police, staff of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, local governmental officials, the Civil-Military Cooperation Centre and civil society organizations in 2008.¹³ OIOS interviewees from recipient organizations in Uganda described these training initiatives as one of OHCHR's successes; one noted that OHCHR training staff had earned the respect of soldiers, while another commented that increased awareness of human rights had helped to reduce violence.

The Office has had some success in promoting the implementation of the human rights-based approach across the United Nations system

21. The Office is mandated to promote and facilitate the human rights-based approach in the development and humanitarian activities of the United Nations system of organizations. A major initiative in this respect, action 2, linked OHCHR, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs in a plan of action to strengthen human rights-related United Nations action at the country level.¹⁴ While the success of this and other initiatives is necessarily dependent on the commitment of all participants, the involvement of OHCHR has contributed to a range of positive outcomes. For example, OIOS found OHCHR to have played an important role in integrating human rights in some thematic areas, such as indigenous issues, where specific initiatives to empower and include indigenous groups have been adopted by United Nations entities active in the area. As further examples, in the United Nations country teams in Ecuador and Uganda, the technical expertise of OHCHR staff was particularly valued as resulting in a more effective human rights approach in country-level programming.

22. Nevertheless, several United Nations system partners emphasized the challenges in mainstreaming human rights. Interviewees noted the variety of sensitivities and challenges which must be met by humanitarian and development programmes when working to mainstream human rights. Further concerns expressed related to ambiguities arising from overlapping human rights mandates. Some United Nations system partners claimed that OHCHR did not always appreciate the constraints within which they operate.

B. The Office could achieve greater results through a more strategic focus

The Office could implement its mandate more strategically

23. While acknowledging that OHCHR has had successes in fulfilling its mandate, OIOS considers it imperative that, as the only United Nations entity exclusively dedicated to human rights, the Office be more strategic in identifying the activities most critical to fully implementing its mandate. This will enable OHCHR to translate existing successes into more systematic, sustainable and coherent results and mitigate the risks of inefficient resource utilization. Part of this effort must

¹³ See OHCHR, *2008 Report: Activities and Results*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁴ This initiative was in place from 2004 to 2008.

address the need to more systematically assess and monitor human rights, as referred to in paragraphs 13 and 14 above.

24. One challenge that OHCHR faces is the wide range of functions covered by its broad mandate. The Office is required to provide analytical, legal and technical expertise and secretariat support to the main bodies of the United Nations human rights system. In the field, pursuant to the mandate established by the General Assembly in resolution 48/141, it engages in dialogue with governments with a view to securing respect for all human rights and works with civil society and international organizations in preventing the continuation of human rights violations. The High Commissioner speaks out and advocates on behalf of the international community. Finally, the mandate of OHCHR includes responsibility for coordinating human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system. OIOS notes that OHCHR performs these functions within the context of a complex international human rights community encompassing well over 100 national human rights institutions, specialized human rights courts and civil society organizations. OIOS therefore finds it imperative that the Office establish clear priorities among competing demands in order to more efficiently allocate its finite resources and to identify and utilize its comparative advantage. OIOS finds that although OHCHR continues to take steps in this direction, this objective has not yet been fully achieved. The Office reports that it is addressing this challenge through the current strategic planning process for the 2010-2011 biennium.

25. Based on stakeholder perceptions and its independent assessment, OIOS concludes that the comparative advantage of OHCHR in fulfilling its mandate lies in its position as the central reference point and advocate for international human rights standards and mechanisms. The Office has the potential for global impact as the authoritative source of advice and assistance to governments, civil society and other United Nations entities on compliance with human rights standards and on the human rights-based approach. OIOS argues that these are functions that OHCHR is best placed to undertake as the only United Nations entity with an exclusive human rights mandate. While OIOS recognizes the important contribution made by OHCHR monitoring and reporting activities on the protection of international human rights, it notes that these are largely confined to those countries and regions with a field presence. Within the context of its broad mandate, OIOS finds that OHCHR can most efficiently utilize its finite resources by strategically focusing its activities in line with this comparative advantage.

The strategic management plan and strategic framework do not establish clear organizational priorities for the Office

26. The High Commissioner's 117-page strategic management plan for 2008-2009 is comprehensive, identifying four broad goals related to advocacy, country engagement, partnership and interaction with United Nations human rights bodies, and global and national level indicators. OIOS finds the strategic framework for human rights to be comprehensive, with 26 expected accomplishments. However, neither establishes specific organizational priorities, raising questions about overall feasibility. By organizational priorities, OIOS means the precise identification of activities and tasks that are most critical to the implementation of the mandate.

27. The Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewed a sample of the internal planning tools of OHCHR and determined that it was striving to strengthen its strategic planning processes.¹⁵ For example, for the 2008-2009 biennium, OHCHR senior management provided a template to all headquarters and field offices establishing a consistent format for reporting planned activities and outputs. This template required each office to identify which of the accomplishments set out in the two-year strategic management plan their respective activities addressed. Also, OHCHR reported that guidance for the 2010-2011 biennium was amended to better reflect the work of divisions and that it had taken steps to be more focused in the development of its strategic management plan for 2010-2011 by selecting six thematic priority areas for which global strategies and expected accomplishments would be determined within available resources. Further, OHCHR reported that a management consultancy firm had started to facilitate joint thinking among senior managers towards the consolidation of strategies and work processes.

28. Despite these steps, however, OIOS notes that the current strategic management plan, strategic framework and other annual workplan documents do not provide a clear plan for the coherent implementation of activities. Despite some identification of specific activities, many references remain broad. For example, OIOS finds no evidence that OHCHR has identified the most critical tasks that the Office will undertake and cannot discern sufficient prioritization of planned activities. OIOS notes a risk to the reputation of OHCHR if the Office seeks to achieve many broadly defined objectives simultaneously and is unable to do so.

29. Some OHCHR staff expressed concerns on this issue. Sixty-four per cent of the staff surveyed strongly or somewhat agreed that the Office had clear and effective strategies in place to achieve its objectives, while the remaining one third believed that this was not the case. Also, in interviews, many staff suggested that stronger agreement on priorities, with clear and more explicit deliverables, would allow them to perform their work more effectively. For example, almost all field staff interviewed reported challenges associated with determining priorities in the face of multiple, competing expectations. OHCHR staff had mixed views on the feasibility of implementing the OHCHR mandate: 44 per cent rated it as excellent or good; 39 per cent rated it as fair; and 17 per cent rated it as poor or very poor. Two thirds reported a shared vision between headquarters and field-based offices with regard to implementing the mandate, while one third did not.

30. OHCHR partners had similar perceptions. They reported not having a clear understanding of OHCHR priorities or a good understanding of the work programme of the Office in the field. *OHCHR states that its field presences operate under open terms of reference, the High Commissioner's strategic management plan is a public document, and that the website of the Office is fully open and accessible.*

¹⁵ The sample included the strategic plan of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division for the biennium 2008-2009, the guidelines and template for the OHCHR annual workplan for 2009 and several office workplans for 2008.

C. Despite some successes, the rapid growth of field operations has not been fully coherent

The field presence of the Office has expanded substantially

31. OHCHR field operations have grown rapidly over the past decade. During the 2008-2009 biennium, more than one half of the Office's total staff of 996 and over one half its budget were committed to activities and offices outside Geneva and New York. Table 2 compares the proportion of staff and financial resources dedicated to field operations in 1996, when the first OHCHR field presence was established, and in 2008. As illustrated in table 2, the proportion of OHCHR staff in the field increased fivefold between 1996 and 2008 and the field budget rose even faster.

Table 2

Comparison of OHCHR resources allocated to the field, 1996 and 2008
(Percentage)

	1996	2008
Staff in field	9.0	50.3
Budget in field	4.0	51.0

Source: OHCHR data.

Field-based successes are being achieved on an ad hoc basis rather than within the context of an overarching strategy

32. OIOS notes that OHCHR field offices have achieved positive results but, as discussed above, these have largely been ad hoc. OIOS notes the development of a 2008-2009 strategic plan for field operations but finds little evidence that a coherent, coordinated field strategy is in place. *OHCHR states that the current planning process for 2010-2011 is specifically aimed at a more coherent, coordinated field strategy.*

33. This lack of an overarching strategy is perceived as an obstacle to the conduct of efficient and effective field operations by OHCHR staff and stakeholders. OIOS notes that field operations are hampered by insufficient priority-setting, inconsistent decision-making and limited standardization of work methods. Furthermore, OIOS finds no evidence of a systematic approach to decisions concerning the location and type of OHCHR field presences. The resulting allocation of resources does not appear sufficiently strategic. *OHCHR states that the overarching strategy for field presence expansion ... has been clear from the beginning, and the 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 bienniums have been periods of further refining the strategies for each [field] model.*

Terms of engagement for field operations are lacking, including entry and exit strategies

34. The High Commissioner's strategic management plan for 2008-2009 envisages a field-engagement approach that is based on an Office-wide assessment of the human rights situation and need, with responses formulated in line with its areas of

expertise and comparative advantage.¹⁶ OIOS acknowledges that OHCHR faces limitations on its strategic decision-making, given the larger political framework, and recognizes the need for some flexibility given the hugely varying context on the ground. However, OIOS finds that the ongoing systematic assessment needed to implement the envisaged approach is not consistently taking place and that the entry strategies for field presences needed to implement the envisaged approach are currently lacking.¹⁷

35. OIOS also recognizes an inherent tension between the technical assistance and capacity-building role of OHCHR and its monitoring role, which includes reporting on violations. OIOS notes, however, that OHCHR has not yet succeeded in developing and implementing strategies to address this tension. Data collected during OIOS field visits consistently point to greater receptivity on the part of governments to OHCHR technical assistance and capacity-building, and less acceptance of its monitoring and reporting activities. OIOS finds evidence that this asymmetry affects OHCHR work priorities in the field. In both country offices visited by OIOS, delays in field mandate renewals were cited by numerous interviewees as inhibiting the effectiveness of the OHCHR field presence. Consequences included delays in issuing publications and in renewing staff contracts and uncertainties concerning future joint commitments with United Nations partners. OIOS notes that, to be more fully effective, OHCHR needs an overarching, clear entry strategy which explicitly addresses the role it will play and which is aligned with the political situation in individual countries.

36. OIOS also finds little evidence of an overarching clear exit strategy for field presences, or that OHCHR is sufficiently identifying, monitoring and reporting on the longer-term outcomes of its field presences. This may be linked to the difficulty of measuring outcomes, but it also reflects the willingness of many host governments to retain an office once established. However, OIOS notes that, without a clear exit strategy, OHCHR runs the risk of becoming entrenched in the countries in which it is located rather than contributing to sustainable outcomes that are independent of its continuing presence. This problem was recognized in a 2007 independent impact assessment of the Colombian office.¹⁸ *OHCHR states that while field presences necessarily should be conceived as long term — advances in human rights require changes in mindsets which take a long time — political changes on the ground can abruptly end the Office's direct involvement or drastically modify it.*

Roles and priorities of different types of field presences are unclear

37. In December 2008, OHCHR operated 50 field presences throughout the world, including 8 country offices, 10 regional offices and related facilities, and 15 human rights advisers; it also provided 22 staff to assist the human rights teams working within peacekeeping missions.¹⁹ A comparison of the distribution of staff and financial resources across these field presences over the past 12 years is shown in table 3.

¹⁶ *High Commissioner's Strategic Management Plan 2008-2009*, p. 20.

¹⁷ OHCHR informs OIOS that it has entry strategies for several countries and is implementing an exit strategy for one country.

¹⁸ Varela Quirós, Villarán de la Puente, Cleves Saa, "Impact assessment: Colombia office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights", November 2007, p. 17.

¹⁹ OHCHR, *2008 Report: Activities and Results*, pp. 68-70.

Table 3
Distribution of OHCHR resources in the field, 1996 and 2008
 (Percentage)

	1996	2008
Country offices		
Field staff	100	79.1
Field budget	100	67.7
Regional offices		
Field staff	0	12.8
Field budget	0	11.8
Human rights advisers		
Field staff	0	3.7
Field budget	0	6.6
Human rights component of peacekeeping missions		
Field staff	0	4.3
Field budget	0	14.0

Source: Data provided by UNHCR.

38. Based on its analysis of interview and survey data, OIOS identified the primary strengths and vulnerabilities of each of the four types of field presences, as summarized in table 4.

Table 4
Characteristics of different types of OHCHR field presences

Type of field presence	Strengths	Vulnerabilities
Country office	Stand-alone status provides visibility and strong voice Country-specific work programme can be tailored May deliver significant achievements on the ground	Activities dependent on host government receptivity Resource-intensive and limited to a few countries Tendency to undertake activities itself rather than with partners, encouraging institutionalization within the country and limiting sustainability
Regional office	Potential coverage of countries without a stand-alone country office	Limited resources under current arrangements

<i>Type of field presence</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Vulnerabilities</i>
Human rights adviser	Ability to interact with the regional offices of other United Nations entities	Ambiguities about role and function
	Potential to become the go-to repository of human rights expertise in the region	Misalignment between stakeholder expectations and office capacity
	Promotes natural integration within the United Nations country team	Effectiveness dependent on relations within the United Nations country team
	Promotes focus on technical assistance, coordination and working through partners	Limited guidance from headquarters, and inconsistency among United Nations country teams, concerning the degree of proactivity of the human rights adviser
Human rights component of peacekeeping mission		Dual reporting lines (OHCHR and Resident Coordinator) complicate planning and accountability
	Increased focus on coordination and working through other United Nations partners	Difficulty maintaining independent voice
	Benefits from strong voice of the Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and access to mission resources	Tension between political peacekeeping mandate and OHCHR mandate
		Dual reporting lines (OHCHR and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General) complicate planning and accountability

39. OIOS notes several issues related to the four types of OHCHR field presences. First, with regard to country offices, OIOS questions whether the current significant investment in these offices is an optimal use of resources and makes best use of the strengths of OHCHR. Despite the potential advantages of their visibility and stand-alone status, country offices absorb a significant proportion of the field budget and

their effectiveness is largely dependent on the receptivity of host Governments.²⁰ *OHCHR states that country offices represent the OHCHR field engagement at it fullest, based on the convergence of the political will of the host country to work with the Office, donor support, the systemic human rights challenges to address, and the High Commissioner's independent judgement on the placement of her staff and the resources required. While they are the exception rather than the rule, the country offices have the most potential insofar as the Office's impact on the ground.*

40. OIOS observes that, while the regional office model may have additional potential, a more developed strategy is needed, as considerable uncertainty surrounds the role and priorities of current OHCHR regional offices. The expectations of regional offices are also often greater than their capacity to meet those expectations. OIOS observes that human rights advisers can be highly effective under optimal conditions. In one country visited by OIOS, stakeholders attributed the success of the human rights adviser presence to the credibility of an experienced adviser, the mobilization of additional staff support and good working relationships with the United Nations country team and the Government. However, elsewhere, stakeholders lacked a good understanding of the role of the human rights adviser and were ambivalent about its impact. Dual reporting and accountability lines between the human rights adviser and the resident coordinator on the one hand, and the human rights adviser and OHCHR headquarters on the other, pose additional challenges for this type of presence.²¹

41. OIOS notes that the fourth type of OHCHR field presence — a human rights component of a peacekeeping mission — can have an impact, but that careful navigation is necessary to ensure clarity of roles among all of the components operating in complex peacekeeping environments. OIOS notes that these human rights components, mandated by Security Council resolutions, result in increased opportunities to promote and protect international human rights and for effective coordination with other United Nations partners. However, stakeholder expectations of this presence are not always consistent, and dual reporting lines, the lack of a stand-alone voice and the need to manage political tensions and other priorities within the mission are complicating factors. In the peacekeeping mission visited by OIOS, United Nations partners generally acknowledged the technical expertise of OHCHR and welcomed its contribution to the United Nations country team, but expressed concerns about the apparent lack of an underlying strategy guiding its in-country activities. OIOS acknowledges, however, recent achievements in obtaining more structured cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

Field-based staff would like further guidance and support from headquarters

42. Many field-based interviewees and survey respondents report that additional guidance and support for field-based operations would be helpful. The Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division of OHCHR is responsible for the coordination of OHCHR field presences and activities. However, several field staff

²⁰ OIOS acknowledges that some portion of the OHCHR field budget may be earmarked for specific activities or country operations and that there may be constraints on its redistribution to other uses.

²¹ OIOS reviewed the OHCHR internal policy paper on regional offices (17 March 2009), its final policy on human rights advisers and generic terms of reference for the advisers.

interviewed reported that contact with headquarters, including their desk officer, is often sporadic and slow. They emphasize that the rapid field growth of OHCHR has resulted in a need for improved coordination, better communication methods and more coherent work methods. In addition, several field staff noted that clearer guidelines from headquarters for defining priorities and work outputs would be helpful. For example, they identified the lack of political will as the biggest challenge they faced in the field but reported that insufficient guidance was received from headquarters on navigating sensitive political issues.

43. OIOS finds that links between headquarters and the field could be more systematic. In particular, experience and knowledge from the field do not systematically feed into headquarters activities. Further, some field-based staff stated that, despite an annual meeting of field representatives in Geneva, there was insufficient interaction among the field presences themselves. OIOS considers this a missed opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned. *OHCHR states that substantive support or guidance is provided to the field offices and the United Nations country teams on a daily basis by the thematic units of the Research and Right to Development Division, and less frequently but routinely by the staff of the Treaty Bodies Branch and Special Procedures Division at headquarters.*

D. The Office provides significant support to United Nations human rights bodies, but the follow-up to the work of these bodies and linkages with the other activities of the Office are limited

The expertise of the Office is critical to the functioning of human rights bodies

44. Through its servicing of the Human Rights Council, including the universal periodic review and special procedures mechanisms, as well as the nine human rights treaty bodies, OHCHR has positioned itself as a repository of knowledge and expertise on international human rights standards. OIOS acknowledges that OHCHR has done so within the context of changes in the work of these intergovernmental bodies which have resulted in additional workloads in recent years.

45. OIOS surveyed Member States serving on the Human Rights Council, special procedure mandate holders and treaty body members about the support that they receive from OHCHR. Across all groups, 80 per cent or more of respondents considered this support to be very important or important in helping them to achieve their mandates. The survey respondents also consistently gave high ratings to the expertise of OHCHR staff, including their ability to provide high quality analytical, legal and technical advice. OIOS thus concludes that the support provided by OHCHR to these human rights bodies and mechanisms has underpinned them and facilitated the achievement of their respective goals.

Support provided by the Office to the Human Rights Council, its special procedures mechanism and treaty bodies is generally valued, but follow-up to the work of these bodies is limited, and other areas for improvement are identified

Human Rights Council

46. The Human Rights Council Branch of OHCHR, with 22 staff,²² provides support to the Human Rights Council. A large majority of the members of the Human Rights Council which responded to the survey (86 per cent) rated their working relationship with OHCHR as very or somewhat effective, and the support provided by the Office to this body was generally well valued. However, only one fifth reported that all or most of their expectations of OHCHR were being met. Areas in which expectations were cited as not being met include: provision of information and technical support; provision of information in a timely manner; and provision of information in all United Nations languages. Many Council members and OHCHR staff cited a need for greater clarification of their respective roles.

47. Since 2006, OHCHR has provided support to the ambitious universal periodic review process, which will result in the periodic examination of the human rights records of all Member States. Respondents to the Human Rights Council survey gave one of their highest ratings to the support provided by OHCHR in relation to the process, including work on compilations and summaries; 75 per cent rated this support as excellent or good. OIOS also noted some awareness of the process at the country level during its field missions. This awareness extended to civil society organizations, one of which had provided input to a country report. However, Council members and OHCHR staff, as well as stakeholders, expressed concern that OHCHR did not offer more support for the follow-up and implementation of recommendations arising from the universal periodic review. One OHCHR manager cited follow-up of the many recommendations resulting from the review as one of the biggest challenges OHCHR currently faces. OIOS notes that the role OHCHR will play in supporting follow-up to the review remains to be defined; the degree to which OHCHR can support it will affect the results achieved by this new mechanism.²³

Special procedures mechanism

48. The Special Procedures Division of OHCHR, with 63 staff, provides substantive and technical support and advice to mandate holders under the special procedures mechanism of the Human Rights Council. This includes directly supporting the work of 28 thematic special procedures and, indirectly, that of the overall system of special procedure mandate holders. OHCHR reports that the special procedures mechanism has raised the visibility of human rights issues, as illustrated by the more than 150 press statements and 130 reports issued each year in the recent past. Respondents to the survey of special mandate holders rated the effectiveness of their working relationship with OHCHR staff highly, with 75 per cent stating that their overall working relationship was very or somewhat

²² Data from the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/6 (Sect. 23)), organizational chart.

²³ A trust fund has been established for follow-up to the universal periodic review; however, OHCHR reports that it has not yet received any funds. Therefore, it remains to be seen how it would be used.

effective; 20 per cent rated it somewhat ineffective and 5 per cent rated it very ineffective.

49. A number of areas for improvement were, however, identified. Special mandate holders cited a need for more OHCHR staff to be assigned in a dedicated manner to support their work, as well as the need for better logistical support. Also, while the analytical work performed by OHCHR was deemed important, not all special mandate holders rated the quality of this work highly: 58 per cent rated it as excellent or good, 16 per cent rated it as fair and 26 per cent rated it as poor. Another support function identified as needing improvement was the OHCHR Quick Response Desk which has a staff of two. OHCHR does not appear to be fully achieving the envisioned goal — to process and coordinate the provision of information and communications to and by mandate holders. No respondent rated its services as excellent, 50 per cent rated it as good, 36 per cent rated it as fair and 14 per cent rated it as very poor.

50. OIOS finds that the support provided by OHCHR in following up the recommendations of the special mandate holders needs additional attention. No special mandate holder rated the support provided in this regard as excellent or good, 27 per cent rated it as fair, 40 per cent rated it as poor and 33 per cent rated it as very poor. A high-ranking OHCHR manager agrees with this assessment, saying that the Office needed to face a main challenge, the follow-up to the implementation of recommendations made by the special mandate holders and, that OHCHR needed to assist in monitoring this and to make sure that United Nations offices took up these recommendations.

Human rights treaty bodies

51. Human rights treaties are an important part both of the international human rights framework promoted by the United Nations and of the international human rights legal framework. The Human Rights Treaties Branch provides support to the nine human rights treaty bodies, with a staff of 67. OIOS finds that the role of OHCHR in support of these treaty bodies is highly valued. A large majority of respondents to the survey of treaty body members (86 per cent) considered this support to be very important or important to their work, and over 75 per cent rated both the knowledge of OHCHR staff of treaty body issues and the technical support provided by the Office as good or excellent. Furthermore, 89 per cent rated the overall effectiveness of their working relationship with OHCHR as very or somewhat effective.

52. Treaty body members also identified areas for improvement. Some respondents reported that OHCHR could better facilitate a harmonization of approaches to the work of the treaty bodies; 53 per cent rated this work as excellent or good, 35 per cent rated it as fair and 12 per cent as poor. Almost 40 per cent volunteered their perception that additional staff support was needed, with many specifying that having OHCHR staff assigned to work exclusively with their treaty body was necessary to facilitate continuity in servicing and subject matter expertise.

53. OIOS finds that OHCHR support to the follow-up of treaty body recommendations is limited. Fifty-five per cent of respondents to the survey rated this work as excellent or good, 25 per cent rated it as fair and 20 per cent rated it as poor. Follow-up of treaty body recommendations is the primary responsibility of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, but the Human Rights

Treaties Branch also has a role to play. Respective roles and responsibilities between these two units are still unclear. Staff of the Branch identify insufficient follow-up of treaty body recommendations as a major challenge that they face in their work given current resources. Follow-up of the recommendations of treaty bodies is vital to ensure that the legal obligations of the State parties which are signatories to the treaties are being met.

Linkages with other activities of the Office and other human rights stakeholders, and among the treaty bodies, are not strong

54. OIOS identified additional deficiencies with regard to the work of OHCHR with human rights bodies. First, as revealed by survey and interview data, insufficient linkages exist between work in support of human rights bodies and the work of staff in other OHCHR branches. For example, some treaty body members considered that the Human Rights Treaties Branch did not sufficiently promote and facilitate the integration of treaty body activities with other activities of the Office. OIOS found some examples of linkages in its field visits. If these linkages were made more regular and systematic, they could result in better incorporation of treaty body observations and recommendations by OHCHR field staff in capacity-building activities with Governments and civil society.

55. Furthermore, OIOS determined that linkages between the work of human rights bodies and that of other relevant stakeholders were insufficient. These include linkages between the bodies and civil society, as well as between the bodies and other United Nations entities engaged in human rights work. Furthermore, facilitation by OHCHR of interactions among the various human rights bodies was reported by interviewees and survey respondents to need strengthening.

E. The Office is not fully effective in its coordination with and support of human rights partners

The Office has developed an extensive range of partnerships

56. Because the mandate of OHCHR requires it to carry out its work in coordination with Governments and other United Nations entities, partnerships are crucial to its effectiveness. OIOS notes that OHCHR has developed an extensive range of such partnerships, both at headquarters and at the national and local levels. It supports them directly through its national institutions and civil society units and also with technical advice provided in thematic areas. These partnerships are generally valued; a majority of respondents to the survey of OHCHR partners (85 per cent) considered that a good working relationship was very or somewhat important to their own success.

Effective partnerships provide additional leverage for OHCHR activities

57. Many of the partnerships, including the action 2 initiative referred to in paragraph 21 above, have delivered tangible outcomes in often difficult circumstances. OIOS finds that the most effective partnerships provide additional leverage for OHCHR activities, thus creating a multiplier effect on their impact. OIOS identified a number of examples in the field where OHCHR was working with national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to train trainers and to advise those reporting on allegations of human rights violations, or was

collaborating with governmental agencies, civil society organizations and the media to promote awareness-raising. OIOS notes that these approaches have resulted in more people being trained, more violations being investigated and more public relations activities being undertaken than if OHCHR had undertaken those activities alone.

An overall strategy for partnerships is, however, lacking

58. OHCHR appears to lack an overall strategy for developing and supporting partnerships, but does acknowledge recent achievements in strengthening partnerships in the development sector through structured cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs. Interview and survey data reveal that many partnerships operate on a flexible but ad hoc, issue-driven basis, without formal structures or regular consultation. The memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme, a crucial partner with which a formal structure existed, has been allowed to lapse and interactions were reported by interviewees from both entities as being occasionally difficult and unproductive. Many partners also indicated that their partnerships were formed as the result of personal initiatives, thus threatening their sustainability. Furthermore, interview and survey data suggest that individual partnerships are sometimes seen as working well at the field level but less successfully at headquarters.

59. As a result, OIOS notes that the larger human rights partnership network lacks coherence. Some potentially important partnerships have drifted, while others thrive. A number of interviewees from United Nations entities with substantial field presences cited the Office's lack of initiative in respect of some substantive matters with human rights elements, including refugees, trade and intellectual property, and a lack of active participation in some inter-agency forums, including the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on humanitarian affairs. OIOS notes that partnerships which lack the continuity of joint initiatives or committed staff on both sides are particularly fragile. The most common suggestion made by respondents for improving partnership effectiveness was for OHCHR to engage in more regular and systematic collaboration, consultation and interaction with its partners.

Partnerships are not well managed

60. Partners identified several components of their partnerships that were not well managed. Many reported difficulty in identifying the right people to contact at OHCHR on particular matters; the recent expansion of the Civil Society Unit was seen to have reduced, but not eliminated, such access problems. Furthermore, some partners also considered that their mandates were not well understood by the Office and that it did not always consult them on matters of mutual interest. Others reported that OHCHR was not always able to prepare non-official guidance documents in formats and languages that would make them more accessible to those most likely to benefit from their use.

F. Management challenges contribute to inefficiencies

Despite partial implementation of the recommendations arising from the OIOS management review of 2002, significant management challenges persist

61. In line with the recommendations arising from the management review of OHCHR conducted by OIOS in 2002 (see A/57/488), the Office has changed its organizational structure and implemented other recommended improvements. OIOS finds that OHCHR continues to promote an organizational culture in which excellence is sought and there is receptivity to implementing lessons learned. However, a number of the management problems cited previously by OIOS continue to adversely affect its ability to maximize its effectiveness.

62. OHCHR staff do not consistently give the overall operation and management of OHCHR high marks: 55 per cent of respondents to the survey of OHCHR staff perceived that OHCHR was managed either very or somewhat effectively, while the remaining 45 per cent perceived the Office to be managed somewhat or very ineffectively. In seeking to understand this assessment, OIOS identified three areas of particular concern, but recognizes the larger context of fluidity and uncertainty that are inherent in times of expansion and changing management structure. OIOS finds some evidence of: (a) unclear leadership direction, leading to perceptions of inefficient resource utilization and inequitable workload distribution; (b) inefficient coordination among OHCHR operational units and between headquarters and field operations, which threatens the cohesive implementation of the Office's programme of work; and (c) undocumented work processes for some critical tasks, which has negative implications for efficiency.

Unclear leadership direction is resulting in perceptions of inefficient utilization of resources

63. OIOS identified several ways in which leadership direction can be improved. First, while more explicitly established than they were when OIOS undertook its management review in 2002, current reporting lines and decision-making processes are still not fully effective in achieving clarity with regard to work priorities. Eleven per cent of respondents to the survey rated clarity of reporting lines as very effective, 53 per cent rated it as somewhat effective, 24 per cent rated it as somewhat ineffective and 12 per cent rated it as very ineffective. Decision-making did not receive consistently high ratings either, with 57 per cent rating it as either very or somewhat effective and 43 per cent rating it as somewhat or very ineffective. Many staff interviewed by OIOS reported that decision-making processes often did not result in definitive outcomes and that they received conflicting directives on which programme of work to pursue. For example, a staff member in a regional office reported being told by headquarters managers to pursue work priorities different from those previously agreed upon. Another OHCHR staff member stated that it was not always clear who would take a decision, or when. In addition, interview data reveal that the priority-setting and decision-making processes of OHCHR were perceived as highly competitive, with different offices and functions competing for attention and resources. Finally, OIOS observed that in some cases important decisions on how to implement OHCHR activities occasionally fell to individual, and sometimes inexperienced, OHCHR staff members.

64. OIOS notes staff perceptions that reporting lines and decision-making processes are unclear and are perceived to be resulting in an inefficient use of resources. During interviews, OIOS noted several examples of staff from one branch and division perceiving themselves to have higher workloads than their colleagues in other offices. Respondents to the survey of OHCHR staff gave one of their most negative ratings to the goal of efficient utilization of OHCHR staff and financial resources: 63 per cent considered resources to be ineffectively utilized. The timeliness of staff recruitment was also cited as a major concern, with nearly all respondents (87 per cent) rating this as ineffective. During all six OIOS field visits, field staff reported the lack of sufficient resources to meet workplan demands and the need for improvements in the management by OHCHR of its human resources. Similar concerns were raised by staff in headquarters units. OIOS notes that these perceptions point to the need to provide stronger leadership direction and better communication on the allocation of resources and the priorities and strategic direction of the Office.

Lack of efficient coordination among the operational units of the Office threatens cohesive implementation of its work programme

65. While OIOS found some evidence of strengthened coordination within OHCHR, such as, for example, in support for the work of the Human Rights Council, perceptions of coordination within the Office continue to be poor. OIOS particularly notes the inadequacy of coordination between headquarters and field operations. The need for strengthened coordination within OHCHR was the most common suggestion offered by OHCHR headquarters staff when asked what was needed for the Office to perform more effectively, and more than one half of survey respondents (55 per cent) reported that internal communication was not effective. Many staff cited the lack of regular staff meetings at all levels, from individual teams to the Office as a whole, as evidence of this poor coordination and communication. Staff also pointed to the lack of a common approach and a lack of coherence among the various divisions as further hindering effectiveness. In this regard, they referred to a continued silo mentality as separating the various divisions, and also to the lack of a common and shared Office-wide identity.

Undocumented processes for some critical tasks hamper efficiency

66. Despite recent efforts to strengthen its work processes, OIOS finds that not all key activities being pursued by the Office are supported by consistent and well-documented work methods. OHCHR reports that a set of 10 standard operating procedures was piloted in February 2007 with a view to improving and regularizing the interaction between headquarters and the field, and OIOS commends this effort. However, interviews with both headquarters and field staff indicate that more work needs to be done in this area, and OIOS notes that the need to document work methods for field-based activities is particularly important given the geographical distance between operations and the large degree of diversity in terms of contextual circumstances. Furthermore, only some of the treaty bodies have accompanying manuals that articulate the steps and logistics involved in servicing the body, therefore making it difficult for a new secretary of a body to learn the work involved in his or her role. In addition, while there is an official manual for special procedures and guiding principles on the relationship between the Office and the special mandate holders, as well as an induction kit for new mandate holders, OIOS found that documentation specifically aimed at the staff supporting special mandate

holders was limited. Also, one half of respondents to the survey of special mandate holders reported that they had not been adequately briefed on the work of OHCHR. OIOS notes that inadequate documentation on work processes can result in inefficiencies owing to lost institutional memory and missed opportunities for streamlining work methods.

V. Conclusion

67. OHCHR has an extensive mandate and faces a complex political environment and ever-increasing, occasionally conflicting expectations from the United Nations system and the international community. OIOS finds that, despite its considerable achievements, the Office needs to sharpen its strategic focus and better prioritize its work for greater impact. OIOS concludes that its impact will be greatest if it focuses its activities on the areas in which it has greatest comparative advantage in promoting and protecting human rights, including enhanced monitoring and assessment of the human rights situation around the world, in order to better inform its own strategic decisions. OHCHR is entering a period of consolidation after rapid growth in recent years. It has a recently appointed High Commissioner, committed staff and the goodwill of its partners. OIOS regards this as an opportunity for OHCHR to refocus and build on its unique assets and considerable achievements in order to enhance its effectiveness in the future.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Further sharpen the strategic focus of Office

(See finding B, paras. 23-30)

68. In finalizing and implementing the strategic management plan for 2010-2011, OHCHR should further sharpen its strategic focus, identifying organizational priorities and critical activities that will maximize its comparative advantages and lead to more efficient implementation of its mandate. Specifically, OHCHR should:

- (a) Identify fewer and more specific planned accomplishments;
- (b) Continue to develop clear links among the strategic management plan, the strategic framework and the workplans for its divisions and field presences;
- (c) Reassess the current allocation of resources across its divisions, including reviewing the balance of activities among field presences and between headquarters and the field;
- (d) Consider ways of improving the monitoring and assessment of the human rights situation around the world in order to better inform its own strategic decisions.

Recommendation 2: Develop an overarching field strategy document

(See finding C, paras. 31-43)

69. OHCHR should, in consultation with partners, develop an overarching field strategy document that takes into account individual field presence strategies, sets

out specific objectives of its field operations and assigns priorities to its key field activities. Specifically, OHCHR should:

- (a) Conduct an assessment of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various types of field presence, paying particular attention to the resource-intensive and sometimes sensitive country office model;
- (b) Establish explicit entry and exit criteria;
- (c) Provide support from headquarters sufficient to ensure consistency in the nature and content of the advice, resources, tools and information provided to and by staff in the field presences;
- (d) Convey this strategy to partner organizations at both the field and headquarters levels to ensure that the objectives and methods of OHCHR field operations are well understood.

Recommendation 3: Improve the effectiveness of work with the human rights bodies

(See finding D, paras. 44-55)

70. OHCHR should improve the effectiveness of its work with the human rights bodies by:

- (a) Supporting systematic reporting and follow-up of the recommendations made by the human rights bodies;
- (b) Establishing more effective linkages between the work of the human rights bodies and other areas of OHCHR, including the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, and among the human rights bodies themselves.

Recommendation 4: Further strengthen partnerships

(See finding E, paras. 56-60)

71. OHCHR should further strengthen its partnerships by:

- (a) Specifying the objectives and modalities for its interactions with partners;
- (b) Improving coordination with partners, including governmental entities, entities within the United Nations system and civil society organizations;
- (c) Identifying durable links at the organizational level to support partnerships;
- (d) Specifying strategies for enhancing mutual complementarities;
- (e) Clarifying roles and responsibilities for all partners;
- (f) Re-establishing a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme.

Recommendation 5: Improve internal coordination and communication

(See finding F, paras. 61-65)

72. OHCHR should improve internal coordination and communication by:

(a) Strengthening links across divisions and branches to ensure a coordinated approach to cross-cutting issues and to ensure that in-house expertise is used to maximum effect;

(b) Enhancing the mechanisms for in-house communication and participation, including, but not limited to, the establishment of regular staff meetings.

Recommendation 6: Identify and document all critical work processes

(See finding F, para. 66)

73. OHCHR should identify all critical work processes that have not yet been documented and take steps to document them. Both headquarters and field presence work processes should be included in this effort and the documentation made available to all relevant staff.

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